United Nations S/PV.8227

Security Council

Seventy-third year

Provisional

8227th meeting
Tuesday, 10 April 2018, 10.50 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Meza-Cuadra	(Peru)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Soliz
	China	Mr. Zhang Dianbin
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Ndong Mba
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Temenov
	Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
	Netherlands	Mr. Van Oosterom
	Poland	Mr. Radomski
	Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Pierce
	United States of America	Ms. French

Agenda

The situation in the Great Lakes region

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region (S/2018/209)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

18-10074 (E)

Accessible document Please recycle

The meeting was called to order at 10.50am.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Great Lakes region

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region (S/2018/209)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Congo to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Said Djinnit, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2018/209, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region.

I now give the floor to Mr. Djinnit.

Mr. Djinnit: Since my most recent briefing to the Council, a year ago (see S/PV.7923), my Office has continued to support the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region, in close collaboration with the African Union and the other guarantors of the Framework agreement, namely, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). During the period under review, I and my Office focused our engagement on a number of critical areas.

The first issue is that of negative forces in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The negative forces, including the Allied Democratic Forces, continue to attack and terrify the population, causing suffering and displacement and fuelling mistrust between the countries of the region. The Forces démocratiques de liberation du Rwanda (FDLR) remain active and exert control over their disarmed former members and dependants in transit camps, whose continued presence further exacerbates tensions with the host population. The issue of the ex-Mouvement du 23 mars (M-23) members WHO are still in Rwanda and Uganda is yet to be fully resolved.

Based on the outcome of the visit of representatives of signatory countries and the guarantors to the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in September 2017, which my Office promoted, the leaders of the region, at the eighth high-level meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism, held on 19 October 2017 in Brazzaville, adopted the following decisions, among others.

They called for the strengthening of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) Intervention Brigade and for the repatriation, without conditions and no later than 20 October 2018, of disarmed FDLR combatants and dependants still in camps in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and of ex-M-23 members WHO remain in Rwanda and Uganda.

As a next step, the Joint Follow-up Mechanism on the repatriation of disarmed combatants and their dependants is expected to be launched in Goma at the end of this month.

Secondly, I turn to support for peaceful dialogue and electoral processes. Our focus has remained on the situations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi, two core countries of the Framework agreement.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, despite the progress made in preparations for the elections, tensions persist between the Government and the opposition over conditions for the holding of the elections. My efforts during the period under review focused on mobilizing concerted regional and international support for the implementation of the 31 December agreement and the holding of peaceful and credible elections. In this regard, we have been promoting initiatives by the Framework agreement guarantors and engaged key Congolese stakeholders.

With the same aim, I maintained close contacts with regional leaders, particularly President Sassou Nguesso of the Republic of the Congo and President Lourenço of Angola, in view of their role and engagement on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as

the African Union and other partners. Most recently, I facilitated a consultation in Addis Ababa between the African Union Commission Chairperson and representatives of the guarantors and Special Envoys for the Great Lakes region.

Regarding Burundi, the political and human rights situation remains of great concern, particularly as the country is heading towards a referendum for constitutional changes. In consultation with Special Envoy Kafando, I seized every opportunity to encourage regional leaders to remain focused on the crisis and to support the efforts of the East African Community facilitation to ensure progress in the inter-Burundi dialogue and to maintain the legacy of the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi.

The third critical area is addressing the root causes of conflicts in the region. In this regard, the continued illicit exploitation and trade of natural resources from the Democratic Republic of the Congo contributes, as we know, to financing negative forces and deprives the country of critical sources of growth and development. As recommended by the meeting on natural resources that we convened jointly with the ICGLR in July 2017, my office will continue to encourage greater political commitment by the core countries of the region to curb the illicit trafficking of resources from the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Human rights violations and impunity remain central to the instability in the region. Recent cases of the extradition of leaders of armed groups are encouraging, but more concerted efforts are necessary to advance judicial cooperation. Together with the ICGLR, we are working to operationalize the judicial cooperation network that we jointly established in 2016.

The humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region is of great concern to all and requires greater attention. My Office, together with the ICGLR and with the support of the United Nations regional team, especially the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, is preparing to convene stakeholders' consultations on forced displacement to raise awareness of the magnitude of the problem and reinvigorate the commitment to finding lasting solutions to conflict and displacement in the region.

Furthermore, within the United Nations regional team, we have continued to implement the Great Lakes Regional Strategic Framework as a cross-border approach to assist in addressing the root causes of conflict. We have also been supporting women, youth and civil society to enable them to play a key role in promoting the objectives of the Framework agreement. For instance, we are now preparing, together with ICGLR and the African Union women mediators, known as #FemWise, joint high-level missions to Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic and South Sudan to promote the role of women in peace and political processes.

Lastly, we have continued to mobilize the leadership of the region through the governing mechanisms of the Framework agreement to promote dialogue and cooperation among signatory countries. The Regional Oversight Mechanism and its Technical Support Committee of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework are indeed critical vehicles to ensure sustained political engagement with regard to the regional commitments under the Framework agreement and to address contentious issues. I am encouraged by indications of greater ownership, as exemplified by the commitment of Uganda — succeeding Angola and the Republic of the Congo — to assume the chairmanship of the Regional Oversight Mechanism later this year.

This past February marked the fifth anniversary of the Framework agreement. On that occasion, we organized consultations on 26 and 27 February in Addis Ababa to assess its implementation. That initiative came in the wake of the adoption of resolution 2389 (2017), which requested the Secretary-General to engage in high-level dialogue to assess progress and challenges in the implementation of the Framework agreement and to present his vision on the way forward. It came to light that, although progress is slow and the Framework agreement has yet to fully deliver on the expectations it raised, it remains a vital tool for promoting cooperation, peace and security in the region, in complementarity with the 2006 Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region.

Progress was noted in some areas, such as the defeat of the M-23 rebel movement, the weakening of the FDLR and the establishment of confidence-building mechanisms, as well as increasing economic cooperation and integration. However, participants highlighted that greater political will is needed to fully implement the commitments under the Framework agreement. It was noted that mistrust among core countries in the region also continues to undermine progress.

(*spoke in French*)

The discussions in Addis Ababa brought to light the fact that the signatory countries must, with the support of the international community, strengthen their efforts to bring about lasting peace to the region. In that regard, I underscore the important role that regional organizations are playing in finding a lasting solution to instability in the region. I therefore recall the following priorities that should guide our collective action.

First, increased resolute efforts must be made to dispel mistrust among the countries in the heart of the Great Lakes: the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi. In that regard, I welcome the sustained commitment of the leaders of the region and the African Union. At the recent meeting I had on 29 March with President Sassou Nguesso, in his dual capacity as Chair of the ICGLR and Chair of the Regional Oversight Mechanism of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, we discussed possibilities for strengthening relations among those countries through the good offices of the leaders of the region.

Secondly, in the months to come we must continue to focus our attention on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo both in terms of security in the eastern part of the country and in terms of the electoral process. Although measures are being considered to enhance the effectiveness of the MONUSCO Intervention Brigade, the financing of armed groups must also be addressed by effectively combating the illicit exploitation and trafficking of natural resources. Moreover, all parties concerned must fully commit to the repatriation of unarmed foreign combatants. In addition, in order to ensure the implementation of the 31 December 2016 agreement and to create the conditions for an inclusive and credible electoral process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, it is essential that the Security Council remain united in its support for the ongoing work under way in the region.

Thirdly, we must not lose sight of the situation in Burundi. Greater commitment on the part of the leaders of the region and the African Union, with the support of the United Nations, is needed to reinvigorate dialogue among all stakeholders in Burundi, led by the East African Community and its Facilitator, Mr. Benjamin Mkapa.

Fourthly, the countries of the region and humanitarian actors must come together to come up with sustainable and regional solutions to the worrying humanitarian crisis in the Great Lakes. I hope that the consultations that we intend to facilitate with the ICGLR and stakeholders will help in that regard.

Lastly, it seems to me that at some point the United Nations, in cooperation with leaders of the region, must address the problem of overlapping mandates and goals of the Framework agreement and the ICGLR Pact, while considering the comparative advantages of both instruments and the need to ensure complementarity and synergy between those two mechanisms.

The Great Lakes region remains one of the most volatile and complex regions of the continent, even though it could significantly contribute to Africa's stability and development. I encourage the Security Council to continue to urge all stakeholders to work towards the common goal of bringing lasting peace, stability and development to the region and its people.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Djinnit for his very informative briefing.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Balé (Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): Today's Security Council meeting is taking place within the historical context of the five-year anniversary of the signing of the Addis Ababa Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, in keeping with the spirit of paragraph 24 of resolution 2389 (2017). I therefore thank you, Sir, for associating this commemorative meeting with the dual chairmanship of the Regional Oversight Mechanism of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework and of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), which was entrusted to President Denis Sassou Nguesso. Accordingly, we have been afforded the opportunity to share the region's vision with Council members.

I am grateful to Special Envoy of the Secretary-General Said Djinnit, whose detailed briefing throws light on the tragedy unfolding before our eyes, but hope for a prosperous future remains possible through the regional cooperation mechanism that is the Framework agreement. Five years following the signing of the historic Addis Ababa agreement on 24 February 2013, the time has undoubtedly come to assess the level of commitment of each of the signatories to that instrument, which foreshadowed much hope, especially

as symbolized by the end of the Mouvement du 23 mars rebellion.

Today's meeting is part of the momentum of the work of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, in particular that of its seventh ordinary summit of Heads of State and Government and eighth high-level meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework that were held in Brazzaville, Republic of the Congo, on 19 October 2017. The ICGLR summit considered the political and security situation in the region within the broader theme, entitled "Fast-tracking implementation of the Pact to facilitate stability and development in the Great Lakes Region". Among other things, I would mention the summit's adoption of the recommendations of the Self-financing Mechanism of the Regional Initiative to Fight against Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources, which is an essential tool for successfully combating the illegal exploitation of natural resources in the Great Lakes region. The aim is to eradicate that scourge and ultimately achieve sustainable natural-resource management, which is one of the six pillars of the Great Lakes Regional Strategic Framework.

The conclusions of the Regional Oversight Mechanism meeting could be summarized as follows: neutralization of negative forces; repatriation of disarmed combatants; and engagement of political dialogue and processes in the region. The Special Envoy laid out for us the remedies we intend to implement to tackle those scourges. The Special Envoy, WHO works closely with the countries of the subregion and whose regular consultations are appreciated by the Chair-in-Office, has delineated all of the issues in a comprehensive manner. I would ask the Council to allow me to limit my remarks to a synopsis of the activities of the combined presidency of the Regional Oversight Mechanism and the ICGLR.

Since the holding of the seventh ICGLR summit and the eighth high-level meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region on 19 October 2017, in Brazzaville, the Chair-in-Office of the two bodies has been constantly monitoring the political and security situation in the countries of the region. The particular attention paid to the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is undoubtedly commensurate with the country's strategic position in the Great Lakes region.

Five months after the seventh summit of Heads of State and Government of the member countries of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, efforts have been made to stabilize the subregion. Developments in the region, and particularly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, have led the ICGLR to hold two tripartite meetings: in Brazzaville on 9 December 2017 and in Kinshasa on 14 February 2018. Those summit meetings were held under the auspices of the current Chair-in-Office of the ICGLR and the Regional Oversight Mechanism, President Sassou Nguesso, together with the leaders of the Republic of Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo, President João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço and President Joseph Kabila Kabange, respectively. They also met in Luanda for a third tripartite summit.

These tripartite consultations made it possible to consider the political and security situation in the subregion, and in particular the evolution of the electoral process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The worrisome security situation in eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo was also at the centre of their exchanges, which ended with a firm condemnation of the activism of the armed groups. The consultations, sometimes extended to include civil-society participants or other stakeholders, enabled the Chair of the Regional Oversight Mechanism to hold talks on 9 January in Brazzaville with the President of the Conférence épiscopale nationals du Congo, Cardinal Laurent Monsengwo Pasinya, at the head of a delegation of Catholic bishops, following the repression of the Catholic demonstrations that had taken place on 31 December 2017 in Kinshasa.

On 10 January 2018, the Chair of the ICGLR, drawing on the conclusions of the most recent summit on the stabilization and development of the region, drew the attention of Secretary-General António Guterres and of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, to the need for a decision on the neutralization of negative forces following the recommendation on the strengthening of the Force Intervention Brigade of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with a view to adapting it to the new challenges linked to the fight against the negative forces operating in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in order to maintain military pressure and intensify operations against the armed groups, in particular the Allied Democratic Forces,

the Forces démocratiques de liberation du Rwanda and the Kamuina Nsapu, which continue to destabilize the country.

Furthermore, during the period under review, it must be acknowledged that the first electoral process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo made notable progress. Since the publication of the electoral calendar on 5 November 2017, the alignment of the country around the holding of elections on 23 December 2018 has been strongly established.

But those advances must not obscure the many challenges that could compromise the success of the process. Thy include respect for the road map by the political class as a whole, the financing of the elections and the logistics essential to their realization, the difficulties in mitigating the demands of the opposition now taken up by the Catholic Church and other religious denominations, and the strengthening of the country's security in relation to the activism of armed groups.

We are entering the critical phase of the process. We therefore urge the political class and civil society of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to properly assess what is at stake by showing greater responsibility and the ability to go beyond themselves by privileging the general interest, in order to guarantee a peaceful electoral process. In this undertaking, the international community has a part to play in providing support and assistance that could prove decisive. Consequently, with foresight and respect for the sovereignty and independence of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the parties to the Framework Agreement and the guarantors must honour their commitments, particularly in the regional and international mobilization efforts in favour of peace and stability in the country and, at the same time, work towards the implementation of the electoral road map.

In Kenya, while the commitment made on 9 March 2018 by President Uhuru Kenyatta and opposition leader Raila Odinga to reconcile the country is to be welcomed, the reconciliation process must nevertheless be sustained with the support of the main actors.

With respect to the follow-up of the implementation of the road map of the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, the Chair of the ICGLR and Regional Oversight Mechanism and his colleagues have deplored the persistence of violence in the Central African Republic and reiterated their call to the international community to increase its support for the process of stabilization and national reconciliation. The armed groups are called on to cease all hostilities and participate in the peace process under the aegis of the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic.

The Chair of the ICGLR and the Regional Oversight Mechanism is following with great attention the dialogue process being led by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). He supported the efforts of the High-level Implementation Panel on the Sudan and South Sudan, and all African Union mechanisms supporting the progress achieved by IGAD in the implementation of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan of August 2015.

In Burundi, oversight of the process has allowed us to take note that a constitutional referendum is scheduled for May 2018. However, the process of dialogue led by the East African Community, currently in a jam, will have to be relaunched under the impetus of the mediator, President Museveni, and the facilitator, former President Mkapa. The involvement of the African Union, which has maintained dialogue with regional leaders on ways and means to promote the East African Community's efforts, is being followed with great interest. It is worth noting that the release of 740 prisoners, a majority of whom were sentenced for participation in the insurrectional movement of 2015, is a reason for appeasement in the sociopolitical crisis in the country. With regard to relations between Rwanda and Burundi, the Chair of the ICGLR and the Regional Oversight Mechanism is continuing his efforts to alleviate tensions and improve relations between the two countries.

The problems of peace and security in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in the Great Lakes region, which have been the setting for conflict for decades, are undoubtedly linked to those of development, one conditioning the other. Starting now, we should be thinking beyond electoral deadlines, which cannot be an end in themselves. Making lasting peace and stability in the region, which is the aspiration of its peoples, also requires means other than electoral consultations. As we have said, and we can only agree with the obvious: the Democratic Republic of the Congo is undoubtedly the nerve centre of the Great Lakes region, and it is not in vain that it constitutes the cornerstone of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. It is our duty to help it to regain lasting stability so that it can play the role to which its immense potential predisposes it and

so that it can be deployed as a catalyst for integration, a vector of peace and stability.

The Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, with its Regional Oversight Mechanism, remains an essential mechanism for achieving lasting peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in the region. That is why the international community as a whole must mobilize around the efforts of the countries of the region in the context of strengthened and coordinated cooperation. The implementation of the Framework agreement requires greater political commitment on the part of the signatories to give it substance and life.

In conclusion, I would like to assure Council members of the continued commitment of President Sassou Nguesso, in his triple capacity as current Chair-in-Office of the ICGLR, Chair of the Regional Oversight Mechanism of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, and President of the Republic of the Congo, a country party to the Framework agreement. He will support any initiative that helps to coordinate our actions and to strengthen cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations to serve the noble cause of peace, in particular in the Great Lakes region.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Balé for his very informative briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Security Council WHO wish to make statements.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by warmly thanking Mr., Djinnit, not only for his very informative briefing but also for his outstanding work and unwavering commitment to peace in the Great Lakes region. I also wish to thank Ambassador Balé, Permanent Representative of the Congo, in his dual capacity as the representative of the chairmanship of the Joint Follow-up Mechanism of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework agreement and the chairmanship of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR). Five years after the signing of the Framework agreement, it was important for the Security Council to take stock of its implementation and to consider ways to move forward with its implementation. The regional dimension of the Great Lakes crisis must not be overlooked.

As a close partner of the countries of the region and a permanent member of the Security Council, our most cherished wish is to see them build on the trajectory towards lasting peace and stability, which will finally allow them to benefit from the wealth of their natural resources in order to ensure the well-being of their people and to focus on their development.

That trajectory involves strengthening political stability, the democratic legitimacy of institutions and the fight against impunity. In that context, the political and security situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is of particular importance. The elections scheduled for 23 December should allow, for the first time, a peaceful transition of power. Without credible elections that are accepted by all, the stability of the country and of the entire region is at stake. To achieve that, it is essential to ensure respect for the electoral calendar and trust in the process of organizing the elections through their openness and transparency. There must also be a peaceful environment, in which all candidates can declare themselves and campaign freely without fear of reprisals.

Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms is crucial to holding free, credible, transparent and peaceful elections. In that context, we welcome the commitment of countries in the region to follow-up and support for the Congolese people on the path towards the open, free and peaceful organization of the elections.

That trajectory also requires better regional integration to ensure good cooperation among the States of the region. By establishing such interdependence, thanks to the comparative advantages of each for the benefit of all, the region will experience real economic change and development. It is a priority objective of the African Union and France, which has adapted its support policies and mechanisms to make its action part of a regional perspective.

The French institute of Goma, the Hall of Volcanoes, which was inaugurated six months ago and brings together French-speaking countries, multilingualism, training and new technologies, therefore seeks to be accessible to the young people of the entire region. That tool is aimed at not only the young people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo but also, beyond its near borders, those of Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi, to create projects and common aspirations for an effective regional partnership.

To achieve that, the full and complete implementation of the Addis Ababa Framework agreement is essential. France welcomes the renewed commitment of the countries of the region to that end. The meeting of the Follow-up Mechanism on 19 October set ambitious goals, in particular for the repatriation of disarmed combatants. France encourages the countries of the region to do their utmost to ensure that those objectives are fully implemented.

Such commitment is all the more essential given that negative forces continue to operate in the region. A lasting resolution of that problem requires decisive action in three areas, and regional organizations, the ICGLR and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), have a key role to play.

First, with regard to military engagement against armed groups, a key role will be played by the Force Intervention Brigade of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), provided by SADC. The renewed mandate of MONUSCO should enable it to rebuild its capacity for mobility in order for it to engage in decisive offensive actions, as it did with respect to the Mouvement du 23 mars (M-23).

Secondly, political action must be taken in order to demobilize, repatriate and reintegrate those combatants in their countries of origin. I am thinking in particular of the Forces démocratiques de liberation du Rwanda and former members of the M-23, as well as those of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition (SPLM/A-IO). WHO will soon have been in the Democratic Republic of the Congo for nearly two years. There has been progress with regard to the SPLM/A-IO and commitments have been made with respect to other groups. I am pleased about that.

Lastly, I turn to the issue of tackling the illicit trafficking in natural resources, which sustains those armed groups, contributes to their survival and fuels an economy of war and predation. As long as such trafficking continues, no lasting stabilization can be envisaged. There is a need for strong consistent action by the countries of the region, as well as the ongoing commitment of international partners to transparency in the mining industry and a better traceability of minerals. In that context, the resolve of the ICGLR and its consultation with the United Nations Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, demonstrated by the annual meeting in Paris of the ICGLR-Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development-United Nations Group of Experts Forum on Responsible Mineral Supply Chains, deserves to be welcomed.

Five years after the signing of the Framework agreement, visible and notable progress in its implementation would be an extremely positive sign of the commitment of all signatory countries to the stability and development of the Great Lakes region. Rest assured that France will continue to fully support the countries of the region in that undertaking.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): I wish to thank Special Envoy Said Djinnit for his comprehensive briefing on the general situation in the Great Lakes region over the past six months. I would also like to thank Ambassador Balé, Permanent Representative of the Congo, for his presence in the Chamber today and for his very useful statement.

We very much appreciate the great contribution that Special Envoy Djinnit has made for peace in the Great Lakes region. It must of course also be mentioned that we remain very grateful for his major contribution to peace in the Horn of Africa in his previous role.

Five years after the signing of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, the security situation in the Great Lakes region remains worrisome despite the many efforts to find peaceful solutions to the conflicts in the region. The continued instability in the countries of the Great Lakes region has displaced many people and caused a major humanitarian crisis, which requires close attention. However, we also note the modest progress registered in some of the key conflict-affected countries in the region.

For obvious reasons, I will focus mostly on the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The challenge that the Democratic Republic of the Congo faces in terms of the presence of numerous armed groups operating in the eastern part of the country and the huge implications for the security of the country and the region cannot be overlooked. That is why we believe that there is a greater need to address the challenge, including in the context of cooperation among countries of the region within the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework.

We thank Special Envoy Djinnit and the Permanent Representative of the Congo for stressing the destructive role of negative forces, including with respect to the

preparation for the elections. One hopes that the Council will consider this matter as a serious challenge. In the light of that, we once again welcome the progress made in the electoral process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the steps taken so far by the Government to organize the elections. We hope more efforts will be made in promoting confidence-building measures, which we believe are vital to creating the atmosphere needed for the successful holding of elections this year.

It is also absolutely necessary for all Congolese parties to exercise maximum restraint, refrain from making inflammatory statements, defuse the political tensions prevailing in the country and seize the positive momentum created to implement the 31 December political agreement, which is the only viable framework for resolving the current political impasse in the country.

We express appreciation for the role of countries in the region, particularly President Denis Sassou Nguesso, in his capacity as the current Chair of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the Regional Oversight Mechanism of the Peace, Stability and Cooperation Framework. Trust is of critical value, not only in business, it is perhaps even more critical in politics. It is in that spirit that we attach great importance to the role of the President of the Congo, Mr. Sassou Nguesso. We believe enhanced coordination between the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the United Nations, the African Union, the Southern African Development Community and other international partners will be vital to ensuring the successful holding of the elections. While taking note of the improvements in the overall security situation in Burundi, the current political situation can be resolved only peacefully through an inclusive dialogue on the basis of the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi and the Constitution of Burundi.

It is imperative to ensure that the ongoing efforts towards constitutional reform are conducted through broad consensus on the part of all stakeholders so as to preserve the country's security and stability. The peace process laid out by the East African Community in that regard remains very important. We believe that coordination and coherence among the East African Community, the African Union and the United Nations is key to making progress in the peace progress.

Looking forward, the work of the Office of the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region and the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region remain absolutely critical. We appreciate the outcome of the meeting held in Addis Ababa last month on the occasion of the fifth anniversary of the signing of the Framework, which brought together representatives of the signatories and guarantors to review the status of the implementation. We recognize that, five years on, important challenges remain. In the light of the regional dynamics and the continuing multifaceted challenges, the need to redouble efforts towards the full implementation of the Framework Agreement cannot be overemphasized.

Finally, we fully concur with the priority areas identified in the report with regard to achieving peace in the countries of the Great Lakes region.

Mr. Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to begin by thanking the Peruvian delegation for having convened this meeting, and the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region, Mr. Djinnit, for his informative briefing. We also thank the Permanent Representative of the Republic of the Congo, Mr. Balé, for the illuminating information he has just provided us.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend our condolences to the Catholic Church in the Democratic Republic of the Congo for the assassination of a priest last Sunday, killed by unidentified armed elements after holding mass.

The Great Lakes region is of strategic importance for the African continent, and the stability of the region is linked to the stability of the entire continent. It is essential that the countries in the region, which share many common interests and challenges, are able to find common language to try to address their problems. In order to do so, they must use the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, signed on 24 February 2013 in Addis Ababa, which continues to be a very useful instrument.

In order to stabilize the Great Lakes region, we must create a favourable environment and promote the economic development of the region. In an environment of peace and security, its great potential and natural resources would allow the flourishing of that important region, since peace would make it unnecessary to spend

the immense amounts of money wasted today on armed conflicts that are bleeding them dry. The international community must help those countries by assisting in the development of key economic sectors.

For the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, it is important that countries of the region develop policies that promote confidence, encourage neighbourly relations and help resolve differences through direct, frank and inclusive dialogue. They must also respect the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the other countries in the region. We hope that the international community will act based on respect for the sovereignty and views of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and help the country implement political agreements, advance security sector reform, strengthen governance in certain areas of the country, promote national reconciliation and work to achieve peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region.

Neighbouring countries, regional organizations and subregional organizations have an important role to play alongside the international community. Leaders of neighbouring countries, the African Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the East African Community are uniquely positioned to resolve the question of Burundi, the question of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and other issues.

We take this opportunity to express the appreciation of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea to His Excellency President Denis Sassou Nguesso of the Congolese Republic both as President of the Great Lakes Conference and of the Follow-up Mechanism of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, and to President João Lourenço of Angola for their efforts to resolve the problems that the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes region are facing.

The situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is key to the comprehensive stabilization of the region. The international community must support the Democratic Republic of the Congo in that process. The country will be going through a decisive stage when it holds elections in December, which we hope will lead to the beginning of a new stage for the future of the Congolese people. The post-electoral process of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is as important as the current situation. That is why possible outcomes must be closely reviewed. The stability of the country is key to the entire region. The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo must complete its delicate task and collaborate closely with the Government. All stakeholders in the Democratic Republic of the Congo should pool their efforts and try to find solutions to their differences, while prioritizing the interests of all Congolese.

We are pleased to note that the situation in Burundi has stabilized and that the members of the Council have been able to agree on a statement with regard to the country. We hope that Burundians will be able to resolve their problems internally through negotiations.

In conclusion, I would like to call on the United Nations to continue to play a leading role and to coordinate all efforts and mechanisms for the stabilization and development of that important region. Equatorial Guinea is prepared to make its modest contribution to that process.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): I wanted to take the floor because we are at an important point in this region. I also want to welcome the Special Representative of the Secretary-General back to the Security Council and, through him, to thank the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) for everything it is doing. It was also extremely helpful to have the update from the Ambassador of the Congo. I would like to start by saying to my good friend the Ambassador of Equatorial Guinea that the contribution that his country makes is not modest. It is much more than that.

It has been five years since the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework was signed. It has proved to be crucial to pursuing peace and stability in the Great Lakes region. But as the Special Representative and the Ambassador of the Congo have spelled out, the Democratic Republic of the Congo has always been at the centre of the Framework, and the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo — the nerve centre — affects the stability of the region. As the Council has discussed in recent days, we are now at a critical juncture. What happens in the Democratic Republic of the Congo over the next few months could be a defining moment for greater regional stability. We have a choice between seeing the situation improve or seeing it overturned. The United Kingdom, for its part, remains committed to supporting the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework and to the holding of free, fair and credible elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in December.

We welcome the progress that has been made in the five years since the signing of the Framework. I would like to highlight the increase in the participation of women and the commitment to greater regional and international cooperation in the course of advancing peace and security. Nevertheless, we are concerned about the fact that progress has not been made in the implementation of key elements, including the repatriation of foreign combatants. As the Ambassador of the Congo highlighted, we welcome efforts to reinvigorate the Framework, and urge all its signatories to implement it in full. We are very supportive of what the Special Representative of the Secretary-General had to say on judicial issues.

We are also concerned about the continued proliferation of violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, particularly in North and South Kivu, Tanganyika, Ituri and the Kasais. The results of that instability have indeed been devastating. A total of 4.5 million Congolese have fled their homes and communities. There are more internally displaced people in the Democratic Republic of the Congo than anywhere else in Africa, and more than 13.1 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance and protection. We therefore support the other calls that have been made in the Council for regional players to come together in the interest of stability in the coming months. I also would like to endorse what the French Ambassador said about the importance of that regional cooperation.

I would like to conclude by talking about elections. Credible and constitutional elections are the only way to end the political crisis and achieve stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and we urge the signatories of the Framework to ensure that peaceful and credible elections can take place in December 2018. That means that the electoral calendar must be respected, key milestones met and the confidence-building measures of the 2016 December agreement implemented in full. Critically, that includes freeing political prisoners and opening the political space and permitting peaceful demonstrations. This is a region that is in all our interests. The United Kingdom pledges to work together with partners to achieve progress.

I have some other remarks on other aspects of the region and the Framework, but I will save them for consultations.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Mr. Said Djinnit, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region of Africa, for his detailed briefing. We have also noted the statement of Mr. Raymond Balé, Permanent Representative of the Republic of the Congo and Chair of the Regional Oversight Mechanism.

We concur with the views of colleagues that the Framework Agreement on Peace, Security and Cooperation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region is the cornerstone for ensuring stability in the Great Lakes region. We advocate full compliance with all obligations by all the signatories of this still relevant document, including respect for sovereignty, non-interference in other countries' internal affairs and the strengthening of confidence-building measures among the countries of the subregion.

In that regard, we support an early start to the operations of the Joint Follow-up Mechanism established by the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda to counter the Allied Democratic Forces. The fact that the Regional Oversight Mechanism among the countries of the region is holding regular meetings is a positive development and a testament to the fact that the structure is robust and can act independently and without external guidance.

We should note that, five full years after its signing, the Framework Agreement's military provisions are still far from being implemented. We commend the efforts of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which remains committed to combating gangs and stabilizing the situation. We support full cooperation between Kinshasa and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in that area. However, the armed groups continue to be active in the country and in the region as a whole. Their activities prolong inter-ethnic conflicts, fuel illegal trafficking in weapons and worsen the humanitarian situation. It is clear that a military solution alone cannot resolve the conflict. Comprehensive measures are needed to address its root causes, including the strengthening of State authority and the restoration of social institutions in territories liberated by the rebels.

We are concerned about the situation with respect to the repatriation of several hundred ex-combatants from the Mouvement du 23 mars (M-23) from Uganda and Rwanda to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Of course, the ongoing contacts between the Congolese authorities with the leadership of the M-23 are welcome news, but the lack of progress in this area has already led to recidivism on the part of ex-M-23 combatants WHO have infiltrated the Democratic Republic of the Congo from Uganda. In that regard, we cannot help being concerned about the continuing mutual accusations, including about with regard to support for combatants and their recruitment of refugees into their ranks. We think that the countries involved should show maximum restraint and take steps to avoid any escalation, including by using the expanded Joint Verification Mechanism, as provided for in the Framework Agreement.

Another challenge for the Framework Agreement is the issue of the presence of allies of Riek Machar, former Vice-President of South Sudan, on the territory of Democratic Republic of the Congo. We note the progress that has been made in addressing that situation, and we call on Mr. Djinnit, in cooperation with Special Representative Leila Zerrougui to do everything they can to make sure that the relevant provisions of resolution 2348 (2017) are implemented. We note the role of the Special Envoy in support of engagement in the region, in particular with private investors, with a view to generating momentum for economic cooperation among the countries of the region and building peace and trust among them.

Many countries of the region are at the stage of actively building or reforming their democratic institutions. Some have entered the crucial pre-elections period. We believe that any domestic political solution in those countries should lead to long-term stability if it is arrived at and accepted by the participants in the political process themselves. In our view, the imposition of solutions, much less attempts to subjectively interpret agreements reached, are unacceptable.

We believe that the responsibility for the normalization of the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is borne by the Congolese people themselves. In that regard, constructive external assistance can play a positive role. Above all, what is necessary is the energetic and robust mediation efforts, coordinated with the united nations of such regional organizations as the African Union, the Southern African Development Community and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region.

Mr. Zhang Dianbin (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China wishes to thank Mr. Said Djinnit, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, and Ambassador Raymond Balé for their briefings. China commends the efforts undertaken by the Special Envoy to achieve peace and stability in the Great Lakes region and will continue to actively support his work.

In recent times, thanks to the joint efforts of the international community and regional countries, the peace process in South Sudan has been revitalized and progress made with regard to elections preparation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and national dialogue in Burundi. All of that points to an improvement in the political situation of the Great Lakes region. However, at the same time peace and stability remain fragile. In particular, the rampant activities of illegal armed groups, communal tensions and the lack of economic and social development are seriously undermining regional peace and development.

The Great Lakes region lies at the heart of the African continent. Maintaining the peace and the stability of that region has a direct bearing on the peace and the stability of the whole continent and requires the robust support and assistance of the international community. First, it is necessary to respect the leadership of regional countries and organizations. China has always called for African solutions to African problems and respects the sovereignty, independence and the territorial integrity of the countries concerned. China also respects the leading role played by regional organizations in mediation efforts. My country supports the full role played by regional and subregional organizations — such as the African Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the East African Community and the Southern African Development Community — in the mediation processes and encourages the countries of the region to continue to implement the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region. China hopes that the international community and regional countries and organizations will strengthen their cooperation so as to work together to find political solutions to the problems at hand.

Secondly, support should be given to security capacity-building in the countries of the region. The international community should increase the amount of assistance they give to the Great Lakes region in terms of peace and security capacity-building and help

the relevant countries to assume their responsibility for the maintenance of internal peace and security as early as possible. China welcomes the cooperation among the countries of the Great Lakes region in response to the threat from armed groups and encourages those countries to implement the Nairobi Declaration and promote disarmament, demobilization and reintegration.

China hopes that the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo will, as per the Council's mandate, strengthen coordination with the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo so as to play an active role in fighting armed groups in efforts to maintain peace and stability.

Thirdly, the root causes of the regional conflicts must be tackled. A lack of development is one the leading causes of instability in the region. The international community should honour its assistance commitment in a timely fashion and increase humanitarian assistance. At the same time, it is necessary to increase assistance and investment in the infrastructure of these countries, including health, education, trade and connectivity.

Efforts should be made to promote the economic and social development of the countries of the region and to find effective solutions with respect to youth employment and refugees. China supports the peace process in the Great Lakes region and has actively participated in relevant United Nations peacekeeping operations there. China has provided support to the countries of the region in terms of infrastructure, agriculture, the sustainable development of resources and energy, and has played an active and positive role in helping the countries of the region to enhance their self-development capacity and the livelihood of their people. We are ready, together with the rest of the international community to continue to play a constructive role in achieving peace and stability and the development of the region.

Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): The Ivorian delegation thanks Mr. Said Djinnit, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, and Ambassador Raymond Serge Balé, Permanent Representative of the Republic of the Congo, which chairs the Regional Oversight Mechanism of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, for their updated briefings on the implementation of the Framework agreement on peace, security and cooperation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region.

Over the past three months, the Council has discussed the situation in the Great Lakes region on many occasions, addressing issues specific to certain countries of the region. Today's briefing provides us with a complete picture of the situation, in view of the progress made in the implementation of the Framework agreement on peace, security and cooperation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes Region and the region, signed in Addis Ababa on 24 February 2013.

Despite that progress, it is clear that the prospects for lasting peace and security in the Great Lakes region continue to face security, political and humanitarian challenges. In that regard, Côte d'Ivoire commends the combined actions of the signatory States to the Framework agreement, as well international organizations such as the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the Southern African Development Community and the East African Community, in synergy with the African Union and the United Nations, to provide appropriate responses to the security, political and humanitarian challenges in the region.

My country also invites the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, Mr. Djinnit, to pursue his efforts towards the effective implementation of the Framework agreement, and supports the priorities jointly defined by the leaders of the signatory countries of the agreement and the Secretary-General with a view to the implementation of paragraph 24 of resolution 2389 (2017).

Given the persisting tensions in some countries of the region, Côte d'Ivoire encourages all stakeholders in the political processes and dialogues to increase their engagement in order to reach a definitive and lasting resolution of current crises. My country calls on all parties in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to implement the 31 December 2016 agreement, in an atmosphere of calm, with a view to holding credible elections on 23 December 2018.

Turning to Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire commends the efforts of the facilitator, Mr. Benjamin Mkapa, to relaunch the inter-Burundian political dialogue under the auspices of the East African Community. My delegation further welcomes the decision taken

by the Heads of State of the East African Community during the organization's summit, held on 23 February in Uganda, to continue to support the Burundian political process. We therefore invite all Burundian stakeholders to participate in this process, which should be both inclusive and aligned with the spirit of the Arusha agreement.

The deterioration of the security and humanitarian situation is especially alarming, particularly in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This is attributable to the attacks and violence by armed groups against civilians and United Nations forces, community-level conflicts and persistent clashes in the Central African Republic and in South Sudan. The consequences thereof include a mass exodus of people, which is fuelling a large flow of refugees and displaced persons, and the ensuing humanitarian crisis in those countries, specifically in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Hence my delegation welcomes the renewed willingness of the United Nations, during the eighth high-level meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, to neutralize armed groups by stepping up the means afforded to the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo Intervention Brigade, jointly with the Congolese authorities. We further commend the efforts undertaken by the international community, humanitarian organizations, neighbouring States and local non-governmental organizations to deliver humanitarian assistance to people in need. We encourage donors to contribute to the success of the high-level international conference for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, scheduled to be held on 13 April in Geneva.

The Addis Ababa Framework agreement sets out the outlines for the main national, regional and international measures that are necessary to end the persistent violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in the region. For the countries of the Great Lakes region, regional organizations and the international community, this remains the framework for adequate cooperation to tackle in a concerted manner the structural causes of the instability plaguing the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region. To that end, Côte d'Ivoire calls upon the United Nations and the whole of the international community to scale up their support to promote the more effective implementation of the agreement, which is crucial to peace and stability in this important area of Africa.

Mr. Temenov (Kazakhstan): We thank Special Envoy Said Djinnit for his briefing and commend his tireless efforts and dedication to achieving peace and stability in the region. We welcome the Permanent Representative of the Republic of the Congo — which chairs the Peace and Security Council Framework Regional Oversight Mechanism — Ambassador Raymond Serge Balé, and thank him for his briefing as well.

Kazakhstan commends the ongoing efforts of the signatory countries to implement the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, which is vital for achieving stability in the region. We welcome the growing ownership of the signatories in terms of implementing the Framework and working towards ongoing reforms. At the same time, we express concern at the recurring cycles of conflict and violence, as well as at the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the region.

The destabilizing activities of local and foreign armed groups are exacerbating political tensions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is necessary to support and strengthen the capacity of the Forces armies de la République démocratique du Congo to combat armed groups with the assistance of the Intervention Brigade of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is also important to reactivate the regional follow-up mechanism to expedite the repatriation of disarmed combatants in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and neighbouring countries.

We welcome the efforts of the Special Envoy in working with the African Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the Southern African Development Community, the European Union and other partners to develop a coordinated regional and international approach for stabilization in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In this regard, we hope that the recent meeting of the guarantors, held in Addis Ababa from 24 to 26 February, will bring positive results. The political aspiration and will of regional leaders are important.

We share the concern about the lack of progress in the inter-Burundian dialogue. We call on all stakeholders to make efforts to establish a constructive dialogue

in the spirit of the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi, leading to peaceful, free and inclusive elections. We therefore welcome the efforts of the facilitator, the former President of Tanzania, Benjamin Mkapa. The international community should continue to support the East African Community in the promotion of inclusive dialogue.

The suffering of the 11 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the region should remain the focus of the international community. We commend the work of the Special Envoy in seeking durable solutions and coordinating the work of humanitarian organizations. Donors' commitments in this process are crucial. We hope that during the high-level humanitarian conference on the Democratic Republic of the Congo scheduled to take place in Geneva on 13 April, viable solutions will be found to provide vital support to the millions of IDPs and refugees.

Important factors for stability in conflict-affected countries are the observance of human rights and an effective system of justice. To that end, cooperation between judicial bodies of the countries of the region can become an effective mechanism in the eradication of impunity and thus should be supported.

The illegal exploitation of natural resources in the current conflict zones, which have become a source of income for armed groups and criminal networks, must be addressed by both the countries of the region and bilateral partners by ensuring the implementation of the Regional Initiative against the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region.

We further note that the Peace and Security Council Framework is an essential foundation for sustainable peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region. We therefore encourage all signatories to continue their efforts to fulfil its provisions with a view to addressing the root causes of conflict, including the strengthening of regional cooperation and economic integration.

To conclude, we would like to underscore the significance of strengthening the security-development nexus while addressing the current political, security, social and economic situation in the region. Such challenges also require a concerted response from regional and international partners. We are convinced that all United Nations agencies should deliver as one in providing assistance in a coordinated manner across the region.

Mr. Skoog (Sweden): I thank the Special Envoy and Ambassador Balé for their remarks this morning. I think that their briefings underlined very clearly the interconnected nature of the challenges facing the region and the need for an integrated approach that addresses the root causes of conflict. We fully support their efforts to strengthen regional dialogue in order to advance peace and development efforts in the Great Lakes.

Five years after its adoption, the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region continues to be relevant for peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, regional stability and the United Nations and the international community's engagement for peace in the region. Regional leadership and ownership of the Framework are critical. Complementary efforts such as the Great Lakes Regional Strategic Framework are more likely to be effective when accompanied by strong national leadership.

We fully support the important regional efforts under way to implement the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. These include the revitalization of the Regional Oversight Mechanism and the active engagement by the chairmanships of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region on issues of regional stability, peaceful electoral processes and transition. In addition, the use of the expanded Joint Verification Mechanism, which helped defuse tensions involving a February cross-border incident in North Kivu, is welcome. Those examples illustrate how further strengthening the region's forums for dialogue, information-sharing and transparency, as well as increased joint monitoring, will enhance mutual trust and transparency. That could help the region resolve key issues central to building sustainable peace. The United Nations has an important role to play in supporting those efforts, and we fully support the work of the Special Envoy in that regard.

The current situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is the most pressing issue facing the region. The severe humanitarianissue, the delicate political situation and increased insecurity are of great concern, and also potentially threaten regional stability. We fully support regional efforts to resolve the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Close

cooperation with and among those actors continues to be essential, however. For that reason, we welcome the current cooperation among the guarantors of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We firmly support the efforts of the Republic of the Congo, as ICGLR Chair, together with Angola, for fostering dialogue with the Democratic Republic of Congo. In partnership with regional actors, we must all support the holding of credible, transparent, inclusive and peaceful elections on 23 December 2018, with the ensuing democratic transfer of power in accordance with the Constitution and the New Year's Eve agreement. That is necessary to foster stability and peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

For there to be lasting peace and stability in the region, it is essential that women's voices are heard. We strongly endorse the call from the Women's Platform for the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for greater support for women's participation in peace and political processes, especially in the context of elections. More needs to be done to implement the Nairobi declarations and to take necessary actions involving disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, reintegration and resettlement. The Judicial Cooperation Network could also help in the areas of judicial cooperation and combating impunity.

The Great Lakes region is home to an estimated 130 million people spread across five countries. The people of the region have suffered from decades of instability and conflict. Successfully overcoming challenges will require concerted action at the national, regional and international levels that links peace and security and economic and social development. Continued leadership from the region, including the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, will be essential if the people of the Great Lakes region are to finally have the peace and sustainable development that they desire.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to express my appreciation to Special Envoy Said Djinnit for his valuable briefing and his efforts to establish dialogue and cooperation with the countries of the Great Lakes region in order to overcome the various challenges they face. I also thank Ambassador Balé of the Republic of the Congo, in his capacity as Chair of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, for his briefing.

The Great Lakes region faces serious challenges in terms of security, stability, declines in development indicators, and the spread of armed groups that pose the main obstacle to the establishment of State authority. The latter threaten the lives of millions of civilians and play a role in pillaging natural resources, thereby depriving the people of the region of important development resources. The humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate and raise serious concern, given the large number of refugees, internally displaced persons and those in need of humanitarian assistance. Those challenges can be addressed only through cooperation among the countries of the region, collective responsibility and finding sustainable solutions to strengthening regional and international partnerships, in particular with the African Union, the United Nations, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the European Union and the Southern African Development Community. Stability in the Great Lakes region and neighbouring countries will undoubtedly affect in a positive way the potential for development, security and improving the living standards of the people of Central Africa in specific and across the continent of Africa in general. In that regard, I would like to reflect on four main aspects.

First, concerning the political aspect, establishing security in any one of the States in the region closely depends upon its political stability, in particular with regard to the peaceful transfer of power and the sustained engagement of all segments of society in political processes. There will be no progress without empowering the national institutions of those States, while building advanced political frameworks and cooperation among the countries of the region, as well as the engagement of their Governments as part of international efforts made by regional and international organizations. We remain concerned about the deteriorating humanitarian situation in those areas marred by political tensions. In order to improve the situation and establish comprehensive peace, the following priorities should be implemented: ending conflicts in the countries experiencing political tensions; neutralizing illegal armed groups; expeditiously addressing the humanitarian crises resulting from forced displacement; and protecting human rights and preventing impunity in the Great Lakes region.

Secondly, the United Nations missions in countries neighbouring the Great Lakes region are the largest in terms of their human component and annual budgets.

Such contributions attest to the firm belief in, and the vital and critical role of, peacekeeping operations in restoring State authority, achieving peace and stability and alleviating humanitarian suffering, particularly in the Central African region which has suffered for many years. Radical solution must be found to address the problems leading to humanitarian suffering, namely, in South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic and Burundi.

Thirdly, the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region was described as the framework of hope when the agreement was signed, in 2013, and as a MODEL to bring about stability. Peoples hoped that it would be a cornerstone for stability and advancement in the whole Great Lakes region. Regrettably, the agreement is entering its fifth year with unprecedented humanitarian suffering and an increase in the number of refugees, with 11 million forcibly displaced persons. In that regard, we reiterate the need for countries of the region to commit to the agreement, and we commend the tireless efforts of the Special Envoy. We look forward to the implementation of the provisions of the agreement and overcoming all obstacles.

Fourthly, the regrettable security situation in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has taken a turn for the worse, as evidenced by the escalation of violence by armed groups fighting among themselves and controlling natural resources. They even attack peacekeepers in United Nations missions, illustrated by the worst attack of its kind in the history of the United Nations, which was launched by the Allied Democratic Forces against Tanzanian peacekeepers on 7 December 2017, killing 15 peacekeepers and injuring 53 others. That attests to the need to unify the efforts of Governments of the Central African region to combat armed groups in the region, limit their influence and eliminate them gradually.

In conclusion, we hope that the conference to be held in Geneva in three days' time will contribute to alleviating the humanitarian crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes region. It will be the first-ever humanitarian donors' conference for the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Its goal is to alleviate the humanitarian suffering of the Congolese people, and, as Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004), concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we are keen on promoting the role of the Committee in anchoring security and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo through continuous communication with Member States, the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and all the relevant stakeholders.

Mr. Van Oosterom (Netherlands): First of all, let me thank Special Envoy Said Djinnit for his briefing and, above all, his important work. I would also like to thank Ambassador Raymond Serge Balé of the Republic of the Congo for his statement and his personal efforts.

In the light of the fifth anniversary of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, I will make three points: first, the Framework is as relevant today as it was five years ago; secondly, the political instability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi constitute an additional serious threat to peace and security in the region; and, thirdly, we should increase coordination with the countries in the region on these issues.

As to my first point, the continued relevance of the Framework, five years since its signing, significant progress has been achieved, as others, such as our colleagues from Côte d'Ivoire and Equatorial Guinea, have said today. The presence of some foreign armed groups has been reduced. Judicial and development cooperation in the region has increased. Regional organizations like the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) have been strengthened. However, significant challenges remain.

Armed groups continue to operate within and across the borders. Members of foreign armed groups, including the Mouvement du 23 mars and the Forces démocratiques de liberation du Rwanda, have yet to be repatriated. The Framework remains the viable political framework to deal with these challenges. Its relevance was once again demonstrated after the border clashes between the Rwandan and Congolese armies on 13 February. We welcome the investigation by the expanded Joint Verification Mechanism of the ICGLR in that regard. We furthermore welcome the renewed commitment of the signatories to the Framework, as communicated after the high-level meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism last October.

As to my second point, the political instability in the region, security challenges in the region have evolved, and 2018 is a crucial year for peace and security in the Great Lakes region. Elections are due to be held in the Democratic Republic of the Congo,

The contested referendum on constitutional reform is planned in Burundi. But every single political and security crisis in the Great Lakes region has cross-border effects. The Great Lakes region is home to the biggest displacement crisis in Africa. It is of course the primary responsibility of Governments to prevent the suffering of their peoples. We call on the Governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi to respect fundamental human rights and open up political space to enable the full and free participation of peaceful political parties, civil society and the media, which hold the key to opening the door to peaceful, inclusive and credible political processes and to national and regional stability. The meaningful participation of women is vital to achieve that end. We welcome the words of the Special Envoy on his ambitions to include women at all levels in political processes, as he just mentioned.

As to my third point, the importance of regional coordination, we often talk of African solutions to African problems, and our Chinese colleague just did so. We agree that only regionally owned and shared efforts will provide sustainable solutions to regional problems. The Framework continues to serve as an important platform to enable such solutions. It is geared towards addressing the root causes of conflict so as to put an end to the recurring cycles of violence. We welcome the role that the African Union, the ICGLR and the Southern African Development Community have played in strengthening the implementation of the Framework. We strongly believe in their important role in mitigating evolving security challenges in the region. We strongly support the Special Envoy in focusing his good offices on supporting those efforts.

In conclusion, there is a proverb that says, "If a man is stung by a bee, he does not destroy all beehives". This is true for the Framework as well. Challenges remain, but with commitment and effort its implementation will be strengthened. Let us aim for reaching that goal as we advance towards the next anniversary of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. Enhancing peace, security and cooperation is crucial for the people of the Great Lakes region.

Mr. Llorentty Soliz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Bolivia welcomes the briefing of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, Mr. Said Djinnit, and we thank him for his work. We also welcome the briefing by the Permanent Representative of the Republic of the Congo, Ambassador Raymond Serge Balé, whose country is chairing the Regional Monitoring Mechanism of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region.

Despite the size of the conflict, Bolivia is optimistic about the efforts of regional and international partners to promote sustained and concerted support for the implementation of the agreements reached. On 24 February 2013, the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region was adopted. The agreement is a regional milestone that endorses national, regional and international actions, whose main objective is to eradicate violence through cooperation among its signatory countries with a view to building lasting peace and stability by addressing the root causes of conflict, deepening collaboration and building confidence among neighbouring countries. In that regard, we call on the signatory countries of the Addis Ababa agreement to continue to promote the search for peace and to consolidate the full implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region.

Bolivia supports the political initiatives and recommendations set out in the latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/209) on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, which, among other objectives, seeks to have a positive impact on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration plans, as well as on the repatriation, resettlement and reintegration of the various insurgent groups, both Congolese and foreign, operating in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in other countries in the region.

Resolution 2389 (2017), on the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, reaffirmed the intention of all its members to support the regional initiative by emphasizing the need for full respect for the principles of non-interference, good neighbourliness and regional cooperation. Furthermore, the resolution emphasizes that the fight against the illegal exploitation of natural resources is paramount, as that is "one of the major factors fuelling and exacerbating conflicts in the Great Lakes region".

As one of the world's richest in natural resources, this region is unfortunately currently experiencing a quasi-imposed reality. The large multinationals and international consortiums operating in the area have

become a factor that contributes through harmful neocolonial mechanisms to the weakening of the ability of States to use and enjoy their wealth. The promotion of the purchase of diamonds, copper, cobalt and coltan, among other resources that are illegally exploited by armed groups, underwrites their war-making activities, providing them with the means that appear to perpetuate conflicts. Indeed, the activity of armed groups in the region, such as the Forces démocratiques de liberation du Rwanda, the Allied Democratic Forces, the Lord's Resistance Army, anti-balaka or ex-Séléka factions, the Mayi-Mayi groups and various other groups that are joining the inter-ethnic and intercommunity clashes in different areas of the region, constantly threaten the consolidation of security, peace and stability.

Bolivia once again expresses its concern about the environment of violence and the deteriorating security situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic and South Sudan. We also express our concern at the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the region, which is deepening the complexity of the conflict, with millions of internally displaced persons and refugees, WHO constitute the most vulnerable populations. Addressing the climate of insecurity in the region, the current political impasse and the continuing uncertainty surrounding election timetables are key issues that need to be addressed.

Finally, aware that the challenges to achieving stable and permanent peace in some of the countries of the world remain complex, Bolivia considers it essential to strengthen the mechanisms that contribute to increasing confidence through strategic alliances, strengthened dialogue and close collaboration with regional and subregional partners. The Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region is a great example that should be replicated in support of each and every initiative that favours, first, conflict prevention, and, more important, peacebuilding.

Mr. Radomski (Poland): Allow me to start with expressing my thanks to Special Envoy Said Djinnit and Ambassador Serge Balé of the Congo for their very informative briefings.

Let me first focus on the current political and security situation in the Great Lakes region, since it has a huge impact on the large population movements and directly affects the humanitarian situation of the people on the ground. The preconditions for stabilization in the whole region are well known. They include conducting reliable electoral processes that build the trust of citizens in the authorities, re-establishing the rule of law and respecting human rights and good governance, since, despite all the efforts to date, the number of serious violations in those areas has been increasing.

Tensions around the political processes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi, as well as South Sudan and the Central African Republic, still remain great obstacles to stability in the region. The political situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has strategic importance. Implementing the confidence-building measures and ensuring a peaceful electoral process by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo are critical to the stability of the Central Africa region. Moreover, cross-border issues related to the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo are of importance in order to address the root causes of the conflict in the region. Countering illegal cross-border activities is an essential condition for the limitation of the destructive activity of armed groups and for the successful submission of combatants to the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme.

We are concerned about the recent significant increase in the number of refugees and internally displaced persons, as there is a clear link between forced displacement and instability in the region. We also believe that greater attention must be paid to the human rights situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, South Sudan and the Central African Republic. An effective international response is needed to put an end to violence and human rights violations and abuses, especially in the case of attacks that target women and children.

We appreciate the efforts made to implement of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. However, more progress is still required in that regard. The full implementation of the Framework is in the interests of all its signatory States. They should increase their commitment and ensure that the achievements in that regard will not be lost. We should bear in mind that the conflicts in different parts of the region have various causes. More effort should be put into preventive diplomacy and the promotion of good practices. The international community must demonstrate its continuing interest in the situation on the ground.

Ms. French (United States of America): I would like to thank Ambassador Balé and Special Envoy Djinnit for their briefings and their work to advance the commitments under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region.

A little more than a month ago, the United States was pleased to join with fellow donors, the signatories and the guarantors of the Framework agreement in Addis Ababa for the fifth anniversary of that agreement. That forum proved a useful opportunity to take stock of the accomplishments that have occurred under the Framework agreement, to review those elements of the agreement that remained unfulfilled and to discuss ways in which the Framework agreement mechanism could be more effective and work within the existing regional organizations. The signatories to the Framework agreement understood that there were inherent linkages between peace, development and security in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the prospects for long-term stability across the broader region.

That theme is also reflected in the recent report of the Secretary-General on the Great Lakes region (see S/2018/209). He stressed that the uncertainty surrounding the political situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is compounded by the persistent activities of armed groups in the territory. However, we would take that point a step further. The political impasse resulting from the delayed elections has heightened tensions and undermined the already weak to non-existent State authority and risks increased violence and unrest, as it provides space for armed groups and other malign actors to continue to operate. We would urge the Special Envoy to focus on ensuring that the elections go ahead and that the 31 December agreement is fully implemented.

We agree that we must continue to urge action against the armed groups operating in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We cannot pretend that there is any solution to those problems without the full implementation of the 31 December agreement, the electoral provisions in the Constitution of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the electoral calendar.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo must hold inclusive and credible elections in December that lead to a peaceful democratic transfer of power. No more delays will be tolerated. We were particularly heartened in Addis Ababa to see consensus on the importance of the election in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to regional stability. The continued strong leadership of the African Union, the Southern African Development Community and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region will be critical ahead of the elections in order to ensure that the preparations continue to move forward and that potential spoilers are held accountable.

While we remain focused on the Democratic Republic of the Congo during this critical period, we must not lose sight of other challenges to peace and security in the Great Lakes region. In that regard, we are particularly concerned about the planned constitutional referendum in Burundi on 17 May. We have already seen numerous reports of violence and the intimidation and harassment of those perceived to be opponents of the referendum. We are concerned that the referendum will exacerbate the political tensions in Burundi and that the development of the proposed constitutional revisions has not been conducted in a transparent and inclusive manner. Failure to respect the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement risks further destabilizing Burundi with unpredictable repercussions for both the country and the region.

As is the case in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the region has an important role to play in promoting stability in Burundi. We urge the regional stakeholders to intensify their efforts to foster dialogue and to bring an end to the long-standing political impasse in Burundi. The role of Special Envoy Djinnit will be critical in working to strengthen and to support the regional mechanisms advancing peace and security in the Great Lakes region as the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi go through this very important period. We urge him to continue to engage with key stakeholders in the region and to inform us of any additional steps necessary to advance his mission.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now make a statement in my national capacity.

We would like to thank Mr. Said Djinnit, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region of Africa, for presenting the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Region (S/2018/209). We are also grateful for the information

shared by Ambassador Raymond Serge Balé on the Regional Oversight Mechanism of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework.

Peru acknowledges the efforts and the commitment of the signatory countries to implement the Framework and the important role of the guarantor countries. We express our support for the efforts under way.

We highlight the importance of the regional approach in responding to the complex and unstable situation in the Great Lakes region. We believe that the efforts made by the various parties in the light of the common challenges must be consistent in order to be complementary and to thereby bring about more effective cooperation to the benefit of all. We therefore support the processes of political dialogue and mutual understanding in the region. We believe that is necessary in order to deal with the challenges in the areas of security, humanitarian assistance, the protection of human rights and the promotion of sustainable development, in short, in order to achieve sustainable peace in the region.

More specifically, we would like to reiterate the need to comply with the electoral calendar in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and to move forward in the inter-Burundian dialogue under the auspices of the East African Community. We deem it appropriate that such processes be carried out in an inclusive manner with a view to strengthening the institutional framework and accountability, and we call for broad participation of the population, and especially that of women and young people committed to sustaining peace and developing their respective countries.

We must also express our concern about the humanitarian situation in the Great Lakes. Violence and insecurity generated by armed groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan, the Central African Republic and Burundi have produced more than 11 million displaced persons in vulnerable situations WHO need to be protected. We stress the importance of prioritizing the protection of women, girls and boys.

Peru supports the immediate priorities identified in the report, which involve initiatives aimed at promoting peace, including firm action against armed groups, as well as urgent coordination to address the humanitarian crisis and a determined fight against impunity.

The meeting rose at 12.40pm.